

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 169 - Mission Halls

‘Where’s Crunch?’ Jake said suddenly, realizing his cat wasn’t following them anymore. To tell the truth, he didn’t even remember having seen the cat since Anya arrived.

‘Was he with you? You were already alone when we met you in the other lobby.’ Will just shrugged his shoulders like, ‘How the hell should I know?’

‘Ugh... This cat...’ Jake sighed, then remembered that he could actually feel his cat’s position thanks to the Pet Contract, ‘is not in this Hall! What’s he doing there?’

Instead of choosing a mission as planned in the Oracle Mission Hall, the duo decided to find the cat first in order to prevent the animal from doing something stupid. Jake being its owner, he would be held responsible for any infractions.

Luckily for them, Crunch was not far away in the next room, the Mission Hall, reserved for missions and jobs created by other Evolvers. Following the indication on his bracelet, Jake found his cat near an information terminal in the company of another feline, a leopard, or rather a female leopard.

‘Idiot cat! Come back here!’ Jake called out, walking with an angry stride towards the feline.

Crunch continued to ignore his master’s cries, continuing to sniff the leopard’s behind as it was busy listening to the growling and

snarling of one of the drones. The annoyed leopard's tail was flapping hard enough to slap the reckless cat, but that was not enough to deter him.

As Jake was almost there, the leopard lost patience and gave a roar of warning before sending a huge smack with its claws retracted. Although the feline had held his blow, Crunch experienced this as his first turn down and a bitter sentimental failure.

With his ears low, he seemed dejected, but he soon forgot his depression when Jake grabbed him by the neck again, lifting him up in the air to give him yet another sanctimonious sermon.

'You run off without warning to pick up a leopard? Seriously?' Jake said sputtering on the cat's head the size of a mastiff, the cat hanging in the air not daring to move for fear of making things worse.

Will, a few meters behind, froze in place trying to plead to the other aliens in the room that he had nothing to do with this man... and this cat. Sarah, who had been alerted by the noise, decided to stay out of sight incognito. Even the leopard that still had its front paw up in the air ready to strike was watching them with its eyes wide open in a wary manner.

'No wonder the cat is so shameless... Such a pet, such a master!'

This was the view of many in the room, especially the few earthlings and other humans who were present at the scene. If Jake could understand them, he probably would have yelled at his cat even louder. The two pink-haired nobles had also followed them into the Hall and the younger one was barely holding back from bursting out in laughter.

‘They’re so dumb!’ She whispered to her sister Enya next door with a hand covering her mouth.

‘Keep it to yourself, Esya. We might end up collaborating with them.’ The older sister in turn lectured the young lady, but with much more elegance and discretion than Jake.

Meanwhile, Crunch had learned his lesson and completely forgotten the leopard he’d grown infatuated with. When Jake put him down on the floor, he rubbed himself against his master’s leg, purring as if nothing had happened, ignoring the other feline as if she no longer existed.

After these months of Ordeal, Jake was virtually immune to embarrassment and discomfort. Once the scolding was over, he went to an information terminal to check on available missions and job offers. Will did the same, while Sarah had finished her pickings.

A list appeared in front of him with different salaries and rewards, but also sorted according to their level of difficulty. Often the difficulty was evaluated in terms of the number of Ordeals or Oracle Rank.

There could be large variations in strength between two individuals or Players of the same rank, but these requirements were the minimum ability needed to qualify for the mission. It was an effective filter to avoid hiring incompetents.

There were currently few missions coming from their Oracle Shelter, which was normal. The content of the missions was available in two languages, the Oraclean and the language of the species that wrote the job offer.

Jake found two offers available in English and upon reading them he immediately understood that they were from Cho Min-Ho promising

different Aether wages to anyone who joined his faction. The first was for recruiting fighters, the second for competent civilians. If someone had a particular area of expertise, those salaries could be renegotiated.

The Korean did not limit his recruiting to Earthmen. Any animal or alien accepting these conditions was free to join them, although communication would be temporarily difficult.

'Does he have that much Aether? After recruiting so many people he should be out of money...' Jake analyzed mentally, not understanding where all that Aether came from.

Xi answered him and suggested two hypotheses.

[It's possible that they had hunted other refugees and stolen their Aether before they reached the Oracle Shelter, but the most likely is that they killed a large number of Digestors and used their faction's manpower to bring the bodies and blood here. Even without any demand, it's still possible to sell them cheaply directly to the Oracle Store].

Remembering that there was indeed a category selling organic and inorganic raw materials in the Oracle Store, he decided to check it out later. He had enough Myrmidian and Kintharian blood to transfer their bloodline a dozen times. If he could replenish his Aether supply by selling a few drops it might be worth it.

[I wouldn't recommend it.] Xi was adamantly against it. [Those pure bloods are far too precious to be wasted like that. If you're patient and place a global advertisement here or in the Oracle Store Hall you're sure to find a buyer willing to pay a high price in no time.]

'All right, I'll stay poor then.' Jake surrendered with a straight face.

Returning to his original plan, he searched the global listings centralized on Thelma for a mission within his reach. He did find one that suited him. In fact, plenty.

Many factions and trades on Thelma as well as many other floating islands needed to be supplied with fresh Digestor blood and meat to speed healing or feed their people. Intact corpses were also in high demand for research or for making various pieces of equipment or armor.

Finally, Digestor corpses and especially blood was one of the basic materials and ingredients used by the Aetherists. The ability of Digestor blood to attract ambient Aether and to amplify vitality had countless possible applications and had the advantage of being extremely easy to obtain, since these monsters were absolutely everywhere on B842.

Digestor blood of rank 1 or 2 was not very valuable since millions of Digestors of this level were being massacred every day on the planet. A liter of rank 2 would sell for only 1 Aether point, compared to 0.5 for rank 1.

This was still more interesting than selling it directly to the Oracle Store which took them back for 0.08 and 0.007pts of Aether only. The only advantage was that it was instantaneous.

According to Xi, these prices were based on Digestor blood rates across the entire Mirror Universe, as well as the Oracle Store's own inventory. Indeed, on ancient planets blood of this level was worthless and trillions of Digestors of this caliber could be slaughtered in just one morning.

Hmjusuz, gimmt md zfr 3 frt fgmsu jfl qmzu sfipfgiu. Ermpev dmz Jfcu frt Waii om duui ao jfl jmzov ao. lo jfl nmlagi u om fhhuno

qpioaniu qallamrl jaovmpo oaqu iaqaol frwjfw, larhu Daeulomz gimmt lpnniw ruutut om gu zuniuralvut hmrlofroiw.

After accepting all these missions, he waited for Will to finish choosing, while Sarah rejoined them with a satisfied expression.

‘What did you choose?’ Jake asked curiously as he saw her in such a good mood.

‘Like everyone else here, I guess?’ Sarah chuckled with a playful tone. ‘I’m out exterminating Digestors.’ She added as Jake was waiting for the rest of her answer.

‘Oh... Well, we all had the same idea, it seems.’

The two then kept quiet, Sarah petting Crunch to keep busy while Will joined them. The group then returned to the Oracle Mission Hall so Jake and Will could take a mission to exterminate Digestor.

Again, the rewards were mediocre, 0.1 and 0.5 points for Rank 1 and 2 Digestors, but that was just a bonus. If they managed to kill higher ranking Digestors, the rewards would quickly become significant.

It was also one of the only missions offered by the Oracle System, as Digestors proliferated and progressed too quickly without regular extermination. Before the Oracle offered this type of incentive, many planets had fallen thinking they were safe in Oracle Cities.

Eventually ready to set off on their adventure, the group then left the Pentagonal building without wasting any time, heading for the edge of the Black Cube. They paid the Aether point needed to get out, and then reappeared on the Black Cube, which had become invisible again in the middle of the precipice.

Now they were out again, ready to hunt and grow stronger.

